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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the forces that are shaping the current move toward privatization of teacher renewal, focusing on what forces may precipitate a very different structure for schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs), and the possible options SCDEs have to shape their own future. Today, teacher renewal has metamorphosized from graduate study to school-based courses, contract courses, staff development courses, and renewal activities through private consultants or in-house personnel. This paper discusses the implications of a private academy for SCDEs, focusing on a situation in the Cincinnati public schools in 1990 when a commission was established to examine all aspects of schooling. The commission decided to create a private academy for professional development, but the university was disinvited from participating in its design and management. Without university participation, the quality of professional development ended up being very uneven. The University of Central Florida has proposed a teaching academy for the development of educators that will include participation by the college of education, community colleges, school systems, communities, and businesses. From its conception, the academy has been a model of collaborative planning, and the response to the collaborative approach has been overwhelmingly positive. The planning committee has determined that the academy should be a hub for partnership, a site for demonstration of best practices, and a place for life-long learning. (SM)

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Teaching academy in the works at UCF

Teaching Academy on drawing board

The Emergence of Private Teacher Academies: Will the Privatization of Teacher Renewal Result in Major Changes for Education?

A Paper Prepared for:
AACTE Annual Conference
Washington, DC
February, 1999

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Sandra L. Robinson - University of Central Florida

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UCF will offer teachers a place to capitalize on skills

By Catherine Hinman

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the academy, which has a staff of 25. A

The Emergence of Private Teacher Academies: Will the Privatization of Teacher Renewal Result in Major Changes for Education?

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Strand 5: Shaping new Institutional Structures for SCDEs.

I. The Issues – Dr. Edward H. (Mike) Robinson, III

II. The Implications of a Private Academy for SCDEs – Dr. Louis Castenell

III. A Model of One SCDE's Response: A Collaborative Academy – Dr. Sandra L. Robinson

IV. Discussant/Critic

V. Questions

The Emergence of Private Teacher Academies:

Will the privatization of teacher renewal result in major changes for education?

The Issues

The general trend toward privatization that emerged during the Reagan presidency has led to a number of changes in our society. Privatization of certain functions of the Department of Education has occurred. The push to abolish the Department of Education that surfaced during the Reagan years returns periodically to this day and the move to privatize education through the voucher system has continued to gain momentum. We have even seen the privatization of "public schools" in the charter movement as in the case of the Edison Project. Why not, then privatize the functions of schools, colleges and departments of education (SCDEs)?

This process may already be underway. Certainly the privatization of all offerings of SCDEs is not occurring nationwide at the present time but indicators suggest this direction. What are forces at work that may precipitate a very different structure for SCDEs? What are possible options for SCDEs to shape their own future? These form the basis for the important questions to be explored in this paper.

During the sixties, the vast majority of teacher renewal was individualized and centered on pursuit of graduate degrees or graduate courses. A slow metamorphosis has taken place since that time, moving to school-based courses, contract courses, staff development courses, where a course is offered on demand or designed for the needs of the district or groups, and to school districts offering renewal activities through private consultants or in-house personnel.

Today, Mayerson Academy, a private teaching academy[1], funded increasingly through public funds exists for the purpose of providing all teacher renewal activities for teachers in a school district. To supplement these revenues, they are ready to assist others in establishing private academies throughout the United States to replicate their model. Teaching academies, in general, are a favorite part of the rhetoric in school district reform. In some cases they are in partnership with SCDEs. In others, they are not. In the case of Mayerson, the metropolitan university that serves that area is not a partner in the endeavor. Instead, the model seems to promote a limited role by the university, if any role at all.

What forces seem to be shaping this move toward privatization of teacher renewal? At the core may be some of the same philosophical principles cited to promote vouchers for privatization of public schools. Schools are perceived by some to be a part of a big government bureaucracy which is not effectively providing education. Likewise, SCDEs may be seen as a part of a higher education bureaucracy and as unresponsive to the need for major change to address the needs of today's schools. Critics charge that such cumbersome systems can't "move fast enough." They can't respond in individualized ways. The answer to such unresponsive systems: Private business, which will do what is best, more efficiently than bureaucracies. Following this line of thinking, the answer to

[1] For the purposes of this paper, a private teaching academy is one not affiliated with a higher education institution.

the question of effective teacher training and professional development, then, may be to move it to a decentralized, district-based activity.

One approach to examining the issue is to explore the following possibilities. Manno, Finn, Bierlein, and Vonourch (1998) recently wrote an article on charter schools saying, "Recruitment is not limited to graduates of conventional training programs for teachers or administrators. Different paths can be followed into the classroom or the director's office." (p. 498). Once there, teachers or administrators might attend a "Mayerson-type" Academy and eventually be "certified." What is missing is this potential future scenario is any role for the development of educators by SCDEs. Is this scenario possible? Is it likely? A school board chairperson recently informed one dean of a college of education that private teaching academies run by people more responsive to public interests were going to happen. If the university wanted any role at all, they had better step aside and accept a diminished role. Staff development money that often went to the individual teacher to pursue graduate instruction is, in one state, being moved to private or district teaching academies.

How do institutions who are standards driven compete with entities which don't have those "constraints"?

How do we reconcile the standard university practice of FTE driven funding with special offerings of private group?

All of these are issues that SCDEs must examine and become aware of the challenges posed by a future such as this one. To paraphrase Dickens' words in A Christmas Carol: "Are these things that must come true or only things that will come true if left unchallenged?"

THE IMPLICATION OF A PRIVATE ACADEMY FOR SCDE's

In 1990, local business leaders in Cincinnati organized a commission to examine all aspects of Cincinnati Public Schools. The composition of the committee was all white males representing the "best minds in the city" according to one of the founding members. This commission would be free of gender and race politics. No professional educators would be invited to ensure a corporate solution to the problem of public schools. Educators, teacher union, and community leaders are too closely linked with the current statute of public education. Eventually, Louis Castenell, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Cincinnati, was appointed to the committee along with one white female and another African American. The other newcomers worked for CEO's on the commission.

The outcome of the commission's work was to redesign schools, including a pilot mini district which would be free of most regulations, and support for a private academy. The purpose of this academy would be to change the focus of professional development. A brief discussion took place with SCDE's. After raising concerns about academic quality (e.g., curriculum and teaching personnel), the Commission decided that universities remain a part of the problem, and we were disinvited from designing and participating in this private academy. Shortly thereafter, the teacher union signed a contract to transfer over $1 million in exchange for select continuing education activities with many teachers serving as faculty.

Throughout this one year period, these very public events sparked little interest on the part of faculty and higher education administrators. Before long, the long arm of

corporate America reached into the State Board of Education and state government. Consequently, the paean of the academy's success was heard throughout the state. While universities stood around with disdain, the business of professional development shifted from SCDE's to private academies and regional professional development centers designed and managed by teachers. Needless to say, the quality of service is very uneven. What's left is graduate education. Guess what? The state is reviewing graduate education programs for quality control with an eye to reducing the number of existing programs. Local control and accountability is the rage. Where are the SCDE's?

Today, we have crafted a different partnership among the district, teacher union, and private academy. We are hopeful that together we can provide high quality services to teachers. It remains an unfolding drama. We have lost ground that can never be recovered.

ONE SCDE'S RESPONSE

Located in the land of Disney, the University of Central Florida operates in a dynamic environment where, while "Magic" is a word reserved for an amusement park and the basketball team, the attitude is one of "can do." Change is not only occurring rapidly but is expected and embraced. The business, entertainment and educational climates reflect the weather: warm and inviting. Partnerships are sought on all levels. The economic and population growth in the area act as a stimulus for acceptance of new ideas and provide a financial basis for support. This provided a scenario in which the idea of a Teaching Academy went from conversation to a formal request to the state for construction authorization in one month. The concept, endorsed by the faculty, was presented by the dean to the provost, then to the president, and, finally, to the other deans of the university. All agreed to move other capital projects from the state-approved list to request state funding for the Academy. Following is a description of the proposal for the Academy and the process used to design it:

> THE UCF ACADEMY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS is a collaborative venture that links the UCF College of Education, community colleges, the school systems, communities and businesses in the Central Florida service area. Simply stated, the Academy will serve as a hub for collaboration for best practices in teaching and learning. Its purpose is to serve as a site for the initial preparation of professionals in education (including teachers; counselors; administrators; specialists in the arts, physical education, exceptional education; and the like); for communication among educators in PreK through 16 settings with the goal of creating a seamless system of education; for professional development activities for faculty in these educational environments; for the offering of undergraduate, masters and doctoral level study, as well as continuing education; for the generation, planning, operationalizing, and sharing of research on effective educational strategies; and for the facilitation of communication among all stakeholders in education: educators, parents, community agencies, businesses, political leaders, as well as any others who wish to be involved.

The need for the Academy is evident. School systems are articulating the need for more organized and effective approaches to professional development; the Chambers of Commerce are exploring an "academy" approach to promote widespread involvement in professional development; College of Education faculty are in need of facilities to prepare educators for the rapidly growing and more diverse educational systems in central Florida; parent groups have expressed a desire for more effective and stable means of educating parents who serve on school advisory councils. The Academy is needed to provide for the increasing demands for competent, caring, and qualified professionals to meet the needs of not only current residents of Central Florida, but to attract businesses and industries as outlined in the planning efforts of the I-4 corridor. UCF is uniquely situated and qualified to lead this effort since the university has been cited as a key reason for the location of business and industry in Central Florida in recent years. UCF, as an active metropolitan university, is playing a vital role in the development of Central Florida in all aspects and the College of Education, fully accredited and cited as exemplary by a national group for its partnership efforts, is well-positioned to serve as a leader in providing coordination of educational efforts.

The Academy will be a place...

... where
- ... educators and their supporters join forces to enhance the teaching and learning experience on all levels.
- ... interested parties continually collaborate to shape its mission and offerings.
- ... pre-service educators benefit from the experience of seasoned educators, who return to the high-tech facility or a satellite program to update their own skills.

... for
- ... answers about education in the region, the nation and the world.
- ... broad-based partnerships among the College of Education, public and private schools, community colleges, principals, teachers, educational specialists in schools, education students, and the business community.

The Academy will be located adjacent to the current College of Education building to allow for the use of the existing facilities, including the Curriculum Materials Center, the gym, counseling clinics, as well as to maximize opportunities for communication with UCF faculty both within the College of Education and in other colleges of the University. The Academy, funded with $6.5 million dollars of state funds, will consist of approximately 30,000 square feet and could include the following facilities:

Art Education
Music Education
Physical Education
Exercise Physiology/Wellness
Exceptional Education Lab
Research – Stat Lab
District Representative Offices
Faculty Offices
The Lockheed Martin/UCF Academy for Mathematics and Science
ITV Classrooms
Science Education – Chemistry, Physics, Biology
Mathematics Education
Children's Literature
Professional Development Rooms
Lifelong Learning Lab
Ethics/Character Education Chair
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
Holmes Partnership
Meeting Facilities
Technology Laboratories
Parent Center

From its conception, the Academy has been a model of collaborative planning. Initial meetings to create a vision before the first architectural drawings are made have been very successful. Since August, 1998, sessions have been held with superintendents, legislators, parents, principals, teachers (from kindergarten through community college settings from public and private schools), agency representatives, business leaders, students, university alumni, arts and sciences faculty, chamber of commerce representatives, newspaper and television representatives, and elected officials. Summaries of these meetings are prepared and shared with and discussed by a faculty committee. The official committee, which will represent the Academy to the state for the release of state funding, includes the dean of the College of Education, a faculty member, and a representative from a school district.

The response to this collaborative approach has been overwhelmingly positive. At the first advisory session held to create a plan for the Academy, eight superintendents from Central Florida made the following recommendations:

- The concept of excellence should be infused throughout the Academy to epitomize professional development at the highest level;
- The Academy should exist in satellite centers, within district programs and through distance learning;
- The Academy should design curriculum which addresses real world needs, including cultural diversity, multiple languages, and the like;
- Partnerships among educators and community, the corporate and business groups should be a part of the educational experience;

The Academy should be a resource center for innovation, life-long learning and professional development.

Following the first session with superintendents, responses of the legislators, community representatives, students, and faculty were collected and organized into three categories:

I. The Academy should be a hub for partnerships – It should become a hub to organize what is happening in education in central Florida. Educational practices should be restructured, redeveloped, redirected– through partnership and connections to schools, businesses, and communities; life-long development; strong working partnerships with professional organizations; teacher exchange programs. The Academy should be a center for innovation and creativity that facilitates two-way communication between the university and the community.

II. The Academy should be a site for demonstration of best practices. It should focus on rejuvenation for teachers in classrooms; sharing best practices; instruction and design curriculum related to today's standards. The Academy should encourage activities that improve awareness of the realities of teaching by providing real life experiences that extend into and meet the needs of the community. It should be a leader in innovation and change based on research within the profession. It must prepare professionals not technicians. Activities within the Academy should lead to places that are worth going.

III. Life-long Learning should be the reason for existence of the Academy. Key words associated with the Teacher Academy should be growth, change and connections. This commitment to life-long learning should include an approach that includes mind-body-spirit. It should recognize that change is essential, that change needs to be embraced and should be focused.

It is this input which will be presented to architects for design plans. Another set of meetings will be held to review, discuss and edit plans. Construction will begin in 2000.